

simply *hu*, for many meanings attach to that vocable, but *lao hu*, an "old tiger." Or a descriptive word may be added. Thus *shih*> meaning "stone," could be very readily confused with several other widely different meanings for the same vocable and tone. To it, however, is added *t'ou*, meaning "head," and one has *shih t'oUj* which is less easily mistaken. "A stone" in translation becomes *i k'uai shih t'ou*, *i* being "one" or "a" and *k'uai* the classifier.

The Chinese employ what in effect are compound words. For example, this is seen when, as in late years, they have been under the necessity of finding terms for new ideas and objects. Thus electricity is *tien ch'i*, the "breath of lightning," an electric car *tien ch'e*, "lightning carriage," an automobile *ch'i ch'e*, "breath carriage," and a steamboat *huo lun ch'uan*, "fire wheel boat" or "fire turn boat."

THE WRITTEN CHARACTER

If the spoken language of China is, as we have said, the native tongue of more people than any other used by mankind, the written language is the acceptable literary medium of an even larger proportion of the world's population. It is employed not only by the Chinese but by the Japanese and Koreans. The Japanese have, to be sure, usually put into it only their more erudite productions, but even in such ephemeral publications as newspapers they resort to Chinese characters to express part of their ideas. The Koreans, too, although they have their own phonetic form of writing, until the close of the nineteenth century thought of the Chinese character as the only dignified literary medium. Geographically some other written languages have been more widely spread, notably Latin and English, and the forms of

the alphabet
used most generally in the modern Occident are
probably understood by more millions of people—although this may
be debatable.
However, measured by the population for whom it
is the sole
literary vehicle the Chinese written language
outranks all others.

Moreover, as we shall shortly see, both in
quantity and in quality the literature produced in the Chinese written
character stands
well when compared with that in other languages.
In sheer bulk
it is possible that in 1700 and even in 1800 more
pages, written
and printed, existed in Chinese than in all other
languages put